

SYLVA SCOTICA

PLATE I.—THE FORTINGAL YEW.

SCOTLAND is, in every respect, too interesting and too important a portion of our country to be omitted in any work illustrative of national topography; and though it cannot in the present state of the country be as in former ages, a thickly-wooded country, yet the specimens of Forest Scenery, and the districts, are so grand and impressive, and many of the individual trees of different kinds, are so well attended with so many "spirit stirring" associations, that a much larger portion of the work has been devoted to the illustration of them had it not already nearly attained its destined limit. The author still found subjects of beauty and interest in every part of the kingdom continually presenting themselves, and soliciting, nay, demanding his attention by attractions which he could not have foreseen. He has endeavored to carry his present undertaking no farther than the boundary he originally proposed, and has solicited that encouragement in its support, which he now has gratefully to acknowledge. He trusts that in the numbers of the SYLVA BRITANNICA to the trees of North Britain, he shall be considered to have done his duty, beyond his most sanguine hopes. Under these circumstances, he trusts that in the numbers of the SYLVA BRITANNICA to the trees of North Britain, he shall be considered to have done his duty, beyond his most sanguine hopes.

"A country famed for industry and song,"

but also more particularly to those public-spirited noblemen and gentlemen, among whom he has been so long and so happily employed, who are daily consulting the interests of posterity by clothing their native hills with trees, and carrying into execution every benevolent and patriotic scheme that can increase the wealth and raise man in the scale of intellectual being.

Ancient Caledonia was, as the name implies, almost one vast forest. Many of the hills, which now disfigure the face of the country, and produce only barren heath, were formerly covered with trees that furnished useful timber and excellent pasturage. "During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries," says Mr. Chalmers, "not only the kings, but the bishops, barons, and abbots, had their forests in Scotland, in which they reared infinite herds of cattle, horses, and swine. There are many names of places which are derived from woods which no longer exist on the face of the country. There are in the Chartularies numerous notices of forests, where not a tree is now to be seen. The canon of Elgin, who had the honour to be the host of Edward I., claimed by petition the forest of Langmorgan, to repair his church of Duffus, which prayer was granted. The present of Langmorgan, the undoubted site of the ancient forest, it is not easy to perceive ever existed there: yet very large ones have in our own times been dug from below the surface, and from the number of petitions of a similar nature still upon record, as pertaining to the kingdom, oak timber appears to have been in great abundance, and general use. The decay of the Scottish woods, as it is to prove that they formerly were so, and the improvident and wasteful consumption of wood for fuel, as well for salt works, would sufficiently account for the thinning and final extinction of vast tracts of forest. The unsettled habits of the country in early times did not allow of restoring the woods, and of this work is to preserve individual remains, rather than go into general inquiries: it is to be remarked, that under the spirited exertions of such planters as the Duke of Athol, the Duke of Moray, and many others, the hills of Scotland must in time be clad in all their ancient mantle of trees.

" ———— trees of various shade,
Scene behind scene with fair delusive pomp,"

and the country enriched by those generous benefactors who seek no selfish gratification in the pleasure of having performed a disinterested duty.

THE FORTINGAL YEW is one of the largest and oldest trees in Scotland; it stands in the Fortingal, or the Fort of the Strangers, so called from its being in the vicinity of a wild romantic district lying in the heart of the Grampian Mountains, comprehending a large tract of country abounding in lakes, rivers, and woods, and formerly inhabited by that lawless tribe of robbers.